

As we sat in my office, Sergeant Nielsen told me about another Ranger, a silent marcher who also accompanied him on this journey. His name was PFC James Markwell. PFC Markwell and Sergeant Nielsen had just recently completed their Ranger training when our country called upon them to participate in the invasions of Panama. They both answered the call knowing that the mission could cost them their lives, which was, indeed, the case for PFC Markwell.

After Markwell was killed in action, it was Sergeant Nielsen who was assigned to recover his body and accompany his fallen comrade home on his final journey.

As Sergeant Nielsen marched to Washington, he carried in his cargo pocket the very essence of every Ranger, the black beret of his fallen brother.

The black beret is more than a symbol of an elite fighting unit. It is an outward symbol of those who have gone before, those Rangers who fell in combat, and those who have returned to their families.

It is also about the commitment of today's Rangers who sacrifice much, who leave the comforts of their families, and place themselves in harm's way when duty calls.

On June 14 of the year 2001, by directive of the United States Army Chief of Staff, all U.S. Army soldiers will be issued a black beret as standard issue.

The Special Forces will still wear their green berets. Our Airborne troops will still wear their maroon berets. But after a quarter century of being the only soldiers authorized to wear the black beret, the Rangers will be without the beret that has stood as their symbol of pride and tradition.

As if all of this were not enough, it has recently come to light that the Pentagon has bypassed the "Buy American" law and purchased the bulk of the 3 million berets from Communist China. In my opinion, this only adds insult to injury. For the life of me, I cannot understand why the Pentagon wants our soldiers to wear headgear produced in a communist country and at a cost of \$35 million.

I do not think a potential adversary should be producing a beret that has come to symbolize honor and valor. This is one more example of political correctness gone wrong.

Social engineering within the armed forces of the United States is a policy Bill Clinton started. It has been divisive and distracting to the morale of our forces; and it needs to end, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to, again, thank Sergeant Nielsen and Sergeant Round for their efforts to bring attention to this most important issue. They are two men who served our Nation honorably and who do not want to see the black beret sacrificed in the name of political correctness.

Mr. Speaker, I close by saying God bless the men and women in uniform and God bless America.

#### SCANT ATTENTION PAID TO THE GREAT BRAVERY OF THOSE WHO SERVE IN UNIFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, one of the great privileges and pleasures we have as Members of Congress is to appoint our fine young people to our service academies, be it Air Force, West Point, Annapolis, Merchant Marine, or Coast Guard. It always impresses me when I hear from some of them who have either told me about their experiences or, in fact, have written on issues that may concern them relative to our country.

I had a great opportunity last week to receive over my fax, obviously, a letter from a proud father, George Liedel, who is a doctor in Sebring, Florida, at Highlands Regional Medical Center. He sent this from Jennifer, Jennifer Liedel, his daughter who is at West Point. I nominated her in 1997. She sent this Friday, February 23, from her computer to her mom and dad. The subject: "I think this puts things in perspective as to where our priorities really are as a nation."

On 18 February 2001, while racing for fame and fortune, Dale Earnhardt died in the last lap of the Daytona 500. It was surely a tragedy for his family, friends and fans. He was 49 years old with grown children, one who was in the race with him. I am new to the NASCAR culture, so much of what I know has come from the newspaper and TV. He was a winner and earned everything he had. This included more than "\$41 million in winnings and 10 times that from endorsements and souvenir sales." He had a beautiful home and a private jet. He drove the most sophisticated cars allowed, and every part was inspected and replaced as soon as there was any evidence of wear. This is normally fully funded by the car and team sponsors. Today, there is no TV station that does not constantly remind us of his tragic end, and the radio already has a song of tribute to this winning driver. Nothing should be taken away from this man. He was a professional and the best in his profession. He was in a very dangerous business, but the rewards were great.

Two weeks ago, seven U.S. Army soldiers died in a training accident when two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters collided during night maneuvers in Hawaii. The soldiers were all in their twenties, pilots, crew chiefs and infantrymen. Most of them lived in substandard housing. If you add their actual duty hours, in the field, deployed, they probably earn something close to minimum wage. The aircraft they were in was between 15 and 20 years old. Many times parts were not

available to keep them in good shape due to funding. They were involved in the extremely dangerous business of flying in the Kihuku Mountains at night. It only gets worse when the weather moves in as it did that night. Most times no one is there with the yellow or red flag to slow thing down when it gets critical. Their children are mostly toddlers who will lose all memory of who 'Daddy' was as they grow up. They died training to defend our freedom.

I take nothing away from Dale Earnhardt but ask you to perform this simple test. Ask any of your friends if they know who was the NASCAR driver killed 18 February 2001. Then ask them if they can name one of the seven soldiers who died in Hawaii 2 weeks ago.

18 February 2001, Dale Earnhardt died driving for fame and glory at the Daytona 500. The Nation mourns. Seven soldiers died training to protect our freedom. No one can remember their names, and most do not even remember the incident.

For the record, the six identified casualties were Major Robert L. Olson of Minnesota; Chief Warrant Officer George P. Perry and Chief Warrant Officer Gregory I. Montgomery, both of California; Sergeant Thomas E. Barber of Champlin, Minnesota; Specialist Bob D. MacDonald of Alta Loma, California; and Specialist Rafael Olvera-Rodriguez of El Paso, Texas.

She hits pretty much the nail on the head, as they say. We are completely smitten by personalities and successful stars, rock stars, TV actors, and others; and we give scant appreciation to those who serve in the military.

Those men who just were mentioned, who died training for this country, deserve more than my speech on the floor or her memo. I hope it brings us to call to mind that the great bravery exhibited by our men and women in uniform, those on the police departments, our schoolteachers, our firefighters, you name the profession who works for the public, deserve more than thinking their life's work does not deserve headlines or certainly does not deserve the appreciation of our country.

I salute Jennifer for bringing this memo to my attention. I salute her for her service to West Point, and I praise our country for those young people who choose to serve our country in uniform.

#### INDIA EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I come to the House floor today to speak about the continued relief efforts in India after the massive 7.9 earthquake that rocked the nation in January. After the earthquake, I came to the floor to request USAID to double the amount of assistance it was sending to India, from \$5 million to \$10 million.

Today, more than \$13 million has been sent. This is a good start; but clearly, the \$13 million is not enough to address the continued struggles India, particularly Gujarat, is facing at this time.